

## CHAPTER VII

### CONTROVERSIAL

WHETHER the Webbs—as it is impossible not  
to call  
them—really know how to take a holiday is  
a matter  
sometimes canvassed by their friends  
The answer is  
dubious If holiday be taken in the  
ordinary sense, as  
meaning a complete relaxation of the mind,  
either through  
the joyful sinking into "mere being," or  
through a total  
change in the habitual direction of its interest,  
it is unlikely  
"Mere being" certainly, seems the condition  
of existence  
of which they have the smallest knowledge,  
and towards  
which they have little or no desire, nor are  
their minds  
often, for more than moments, detached from  
their major  
prepossessions From time to time  
however, they have  
removed themselves from their ordinary  
contacts and  
from their habitual routine They did so,  
early in 1898  
Their first great work was completed It  
had been more  
than respectfully received They had  
become public  
characters, and public characters of  
very substantial  
significance Success connoted no  
remission of effort,  
on the contrary Plans were laid, and  
research was already  
set in train for a new and truly gigantic  
undertaking,  
*The History of Local Government in England*,  
before they left  
London for the first of their world tours  
They no doubt  
had it in mind, as they talked to people who  
knew, and  
visited institutions which mattered, in the  
United States,  
in Canada, in Australia, in New Zealand, and  
elsewhere,

in the course of their six months'  
absence

The fact that they spent these six months  
largely in  
learning about the Empire, and in seeing, at  
close range,